

MYTHS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE AND CIA

Preliminary Comment

There is much misinformation and there are many myths in the U.S. about Intelligence and CIA. This translates itself into queer attitudes about the subject and it may translate itself into specific questions on your tour. The purpose of this paper is to surface some of these attitudes. There are no set answers to any of the questions, but, for whatever help it may be, answers that have been used successfully in actual briefing situations are included.

General Attitudes Toward Intelligence in the U.S.

1. That intelligence and internal security are the same.

Answer: The internal security of the U.S. is the responsibility of the FBI, not of CIA. Intelligence, as we use the term, is knowledge of foreign countries. It is a responsibility of CIA (shared with State and Defense), not of the FBI. The division of responsibility between the FBI and CIA is not only functional, but also geographic. There is close liaison between the two services in dealing with situations posing both foreign intelligence and internal security problems.

2. That intelligence is to be equated with espionage.

Answer: Intelligence is knowledge of foreign countries. The methods used for acquiring that knowledge range from the most open through the discreet and secret methods. The great bulk of information that goes into intelligence (say 90%) comes from open and official sources. To equate intelligence with espionage is to fail to do justice to other collection systems and to the whole work of analysis, whereby the dimension of meaningfulness is added to unevaluated information from the field.

3. That espionage is odious or even immoral.

Answer: For those who feel this way, they need never be concerned with espionage. Most people in intelligence are concerned with the other aspects of the profession. Espionage plays a vital and integral role in most intelligence systems, but it is not the whole of intelligence.

4. That the British are tops in this field but that U.S. intelligence officers are clumsy amateurs, gunshy, etc.

Answer: The British are good, but so is the U.S. It is pretty much like the British Navy and the U.S. Navy. The British Navy is good, but not superior to that of the U.S.

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5. That a good intelligence service can always or almost always predict future contingent events ("the crystal-ball theory of intelligence").

Answer: Intelligence is not only concerned with predictions. It reports current events, it assesses capabilities and vulnerabilities, and it predicts probable courses of action--to the extent that the evidence permits. National Intelligence Estimates, for example, concern themselves with three kinds of judgments--judgments about:

- (1) Things that are knowable and known.
- (2) Things that are knowable but unknown (or unknown in sufficient detail).
- (3) Things that are unknown and unknowable (such as who will succeed Khruschev, assuming that this is not known in the Kremlin itself). Obviously, the last kind of judgment presents extraordinary difficulties, but Intelligence may still be called upon by policy makers for a list of possibilities.

6. That foreknowledge (intelligence) necessarily implies counter-action (for example, if intelligence knew that Sputnik I was to be launched in the fall of 1957, why didn't the U.S. use the Jupiter C to beat the Soviets to the punch?).

Answer: Intelligence reports the facts and evaluates them. It does not make policy or recommend it. Obviously it influences policy, but it is not the sole determinant in the formulation of national security policy. Sometimes policy makers give greater weight to other factors. Sometimes they decide and act immediately on intelligence. In any case, it is the policy officials of the U.S. who recommend policy, and it is the President who decides what, if anything, ought to be done in the light of new intelligence findings.

7. That there are no controls over CIA, especially by Congress.

Answer: There are four congressional CIA committees--actually four sub-committees of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees of both houses. They exert those controls proper to the Legislative Branch over funds, numbers of personnel, and quality of effort. While it is true that not every member of Congress knows about CIA in detail, the members of the CIA committees do. This is not unique. Not every member of Congress knows how many atom bombs the U.S. has, but the members of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy do. CIA favors whatever Congressional controls the Chief Executive favors. The President has expressed himself on this point in his 9 October 1963 televised news conference: "I think the present committee . . . is best, considering the sensitive nature of the CIA's work. As you know, there is a Congressional committee in the House, and one in the Senate composed of members of the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services

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Committee. They meet frequently with Mr. McCone. He also testifies before the Foreign Relations Committee . . . and I think the Congress has, through that organization, the means of keeping a liaison with him. In addition, I have an advisory council which was headed by Dr. Killian formerly, now Mr. Clark Clifford. It includes Jimmy Lovell and others, like Robert Murphy, and they serve as an advisory committee to me on the work of the intelligence community. I am well satisfied with the present arrangement." In addition, there are excessive fiscal controls exerted over CIA, as they are over all other government agencies, by the Bureau of the Budget.

b. That CIA "freewheels" in foreign affairs and does not coordinate its efforts with State and/or Defense.

Answer: The President addressed himself to this subject in early October 1960 in a televised interview with NBC news commentators Huntley and Brinkley.¹ He was asked "Does the CIA tend to make its own policy?" The President's answer: "The CIA is the frequent charge, but that isn't so. Mr. McCone, head of the CIA, sits in the National Security Council . . . and the CIA coordinates its efforts with the State Department and the Defense Department."

c. That there is a lot of duplication between the numerous intelligence agencies, all doing the same thing.

Answer: The big three of U.S. intelligence are military, diplomatic, and central intelligence. There are intelligence functions that are an integral part of every military service and some that are an integral part of every diplomatic service. CIA was created in 1947, with the end of the wartime OSS, to (1) concentrate on the specialized intelligence services that are not a necessary part of a military or diplomatic service and that require career specialization, and (2) to integrate all U.S. intelligence at the national level for the President and the National Security Council. Problems of coordination are continually posed, but the chiefs of U.S. intelligence meet regularly under the chairmanship of the DCI (as such, they constitute the USIC) to resolve those problems. Broad divisions of responsibility are allocated by the National Security Council. It would be a mistake to have only one intelligence organization. The interpretation of data requires persons of different backgrounds and organizations with different viewpoints. An even closer integration between the military intelligence services is being achieved now through the instrumentality of the Defense Intelligence Agency. (NSA is a technical service which, while under the Secretary of Defense, actually serves all the intelligence-producing agencies).

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Some Specific Charges Made Against CIA

1. Hasn't CIA responsible for the failure of the U-2?

Answer: What failure? It is important to distinguish the operation, which was a very great success indeed, from the handling of the case after a plane was downed in the USSR, a handling which admittedly left a good deal to be desired. To focus only on the handling is to falsify the perspective. Secretary of Defense Gates, at the time of the U-2 incident, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (2 June 1960) that these flights had furnished vital "information on airfields, aircraft, missiles, missile testing and training, special weapons storage, submarine production, atomic production, and aircraft deployment" in the Soviet Union.

2. Wasn't CIA responsible for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion?

Answer: The "invasion" was an attempt on the part of the U.S. to help, in as discreet a manner as possible, train and equip Cuban freedom fighters who sought to drive the Communists out of their homeland. As for CIA, we did what we were told, and we did it as best we could. Unfortunately, our best, on this occasion, was not good enough.

3. Has CIA been "upsetting the applecart" in Viet Nam?

Answer: The information in the press about CIA is generally based on hearsay. The President of the U.S. is a better source. He addressed himself to the issue of CIA and Viet Nam in his 9 October news conference. The full exchange took place with a reporter:

Q: "Mr. President, could you discuss some of the recent public accounts of CIA activities in South Viet Nam, particularly in the stories or reports of how the CIA has undertaken certain independent operations, or independent of other elements of the American Government, that are in South Viet Nam?"

A: "I must say I think the reports are wholly untrue. The fact of the matter is that Mr. (CIA Director John) McCone sits in the National Security Council. I imagine I see him at least three or four times a week, ordinarily. We have worked very closely together in the National Security Council in the last two months attempting to meet the problems we face in South Viet Nam. I can find nothing, and I have looked through the record very carefully over the last nine months, and I could go back further, to indicate that the CIA has done anything but support policy. It does not create policy; it attempts to execute it in those areas where it has competence and responsibility. I know that the transfer of [redacted] (CIA official in Saigon) who

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is a very dedicated public servant, has led to surmises, but I can just assure you flatly that the CIA has not carried out independent activities but has operated under close control of the Director of Central Intelligence, operating with the cooperation of the National Security Council and under my instructions.

So I think while the CIA may have made mistakes, as we all do, on different occasions, and has had many successes which may go unheralded, in my opinion in this case it is unfair to charge them as they have been charged. I think they have done a good job."

28 October 1963